

# Releasing potential: gain the attention of the board

Explore an extraordinary depth of engagement in Swansea, the hub of a new operating model that has turned around performance in a competitive market, with a 40 point rise in NPS and £17m benefits.

## Summary

See how the business has recognised the contact centre as leading the way in customer service, an operational voice of the customer. Starting from the point where the Swansea centre was about to close, it has captured the imagination of the TUI board. This transformation is entrepreneurial. It's agile, based on continuous improvement. Passionate people are at the heart of success, alongside clear-headed management of resources. A host of initiatives include: knowledge and workforce management, voice of the customer, a new training structure, colleague forums and the opportunity for career progression – a winner in the local job market. The whole programme has delivered significant benefits: customers get through, they get answers and they get choices. Simply, they get better service.

## Key initiatives

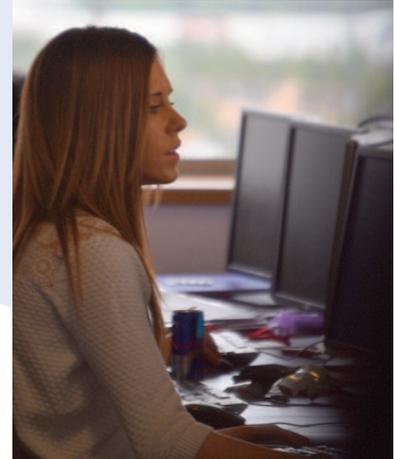
### Entrepreneurs: a community that challenged the board

When TUI looked to close the Swansea Contact Centre, the 40-strong team were put into consultation. Instead of accepting their redundancy, however, they decided to fight back. The bold counter-proposal was to make the Swansea centre the overflow customer contact hub. Key reasons included: the loyalty and experience of the Swansea team (280+ years of service between them), cheaper real estate costs in Wales, a plentiful, stable employment pool compared to Coventry and high staff engagement. For the first time in the company's history, the board accepted the counter proposal and reversed its decision. Not content to simply survive, however, the Swansea team then set about transforming the operation into a 250-seat centre of excellence replacing the Coventry operation. "A great opportunity to make a difference" "An entrepreneurial spirit among the leadership team" "We were so happy when the bosses listened to us" "It's a big thing for a leadership team" "We knew the counter proposal would work".

### Emotionally engaged: breaking down siloes

Cross-skilling is making it easier for customers, where previously specialist teams operated in siloes. There was no consistency across sites, no career progression and resourcing was not demand-led, with huge lost call rates in peak weeks. Key changes have included:

- A new operating model: Tier 1 advisors take the bulk of simple, transactional calls across all business areas. Tier 2 take specialist, complex enquiries. This led to a reduction of 88 FTE.
- Clear career progression, creating higher engagement & lower attrition.
- Workforce management software to help implement demand-led resourcing, with further flexibility offered by an outsourcer. The outsource partnership was moved from India to South Africa, where better quality was gained at no additional cost.
- A knowledge management system, reducing training times for new recruits.
- A new training model, which has a clearer structure and works in tandem with resource planning.



*"We really want to be trusted ... If we get it wrong in the contact centre, it definitely drives detractors."*

**Lisa Steele,**  
Director of Customer Contact

*"The contact centre was the 'lost child' of the organisation, but now we have a voice. And we're not just another contact centre employer. We want to offer a package of real opportunities with clear lines of progression."*

**Angela Terry,**  
Contact Centre Manager, Swansea

*"When I first started here I met a cross section of staff and every single person I spoke to was passionate about the business and about improvement."*

**Neil Sturrock,**  
General Manager Contact Centres

*"Teamwork is high on the agenda here – no matter who you ask for help, that person will strive to get the best answer for you."*

**Oli Jones,**  
Tier 2 Advisor



Raising Standards in  
Customer Operations

## Results

- Service level improvement of over 40%
- NPS rose from 3.8 to 41 in just 12 months, with CSAT rising 5% points in the same period
- £19million nominal benefit to TUI (over 10 years)
- Employee engagement at 80%



*“Even while we were under consultation, we remained professional. We pushed it to the back of our minds and focussed on the job in hand.”*

**Angela Terry,**  
Contact Centre Manager

*“We have introduced competency-based training – something the Civil Aviation Authority isn’t planning to roll out to other travel companies for another two years.”*

**Carys Evans,**  
Contact Centre Trainer

## Continuous Improvement:

Crucially, emphasis is on continuous improvement, with advisors encouraged to share their ‘lightbulb’ moments. These are acted on swiftly (sometimes within the hour) and all agents know what has happened as a result. Their opinions are truly valued. For example, at a recent board meeting held in Swansea, advisors highlighted that all senior positions are based in Luton – and the MD made a commitment then and there to bring more senior positions into Swansea. “There’s an extraordinary depth of engagement and passion” “Training is shifting emphasis from systems to soft skills” “We will feedback customer comments to the rest of the business”.

## Inspirational leadership:

During the transition, Swansea Centre Manager Angela Terry was pivotal in keeping the team hopeful, purposeful and engaged. Her heroic battle to keep the centre open and save jobs has given her a real emotional bond with her teams. At the same time, Customer Contact Director Lisa Steele forged a strong relationship with the board. Her previous experience as a consultant meant they were willing to listen. As tangible benefits soon transpired from the changes being implemented, she gained even further credibility. She has championed the contact centre as the voice of the customer and they are now seen as leading the way in terms of customer service, with the Swansea best practices being applied to retail stores, as well as operations in other countries. “Leaders keep us informed, we keep them informed”.

## Engaging frontline teams:

All these changes mean more varied work for advisors and opportunities for career progression. Flexible working has become common (some advisors are holiday reps on the phones in the off- season) and initiatives have included: incentives, colleague forums and a new way of measuring quality (performance metrics are based on customer feedback via Bright software). The result of this ‘happy people, happy customers’ philosophy has been a 40% uplift in service level scores and a 40-point rise in NPS. Testament to the passionate engagement is that attrition is just 10%, in spite of higher salaries elsewhere in the competitive Swansea market. “We’re empowered to make decisions for the customer” “We can see how our suggestions are being used” “I never get that Monday morning feeling – I just love coming in to work”.

*“If you have a problem, managers will listen to you and help solve it. For example, I was having issues with childcare and I was able to move to more flexible hours.”*

**Gemma Polverino,**  
Tier 2 Advisor

*“We knew we were good at our jobs and it would have been such a shame to waste all the knowledge we had in Swansea.”*

**Tracey Teesdale,**  
Tier 2 Advisor

*“Training was previously very reactive, now it is integrated into operational planning processes.”*

**Neil Maddern,**  
Resource Planning Analyst

*“We have a relentless obsession with improvement. There is no complacency here: everyone wants to keep pushing to be better.”*

**Neil Sturrock,**  
General Manager Contact Centres

*“I’m so proud of the team I work with – the improvement is fantastic and it gives all of us such great job satisfaction.”*

**Wayne Roberts,**  
Team Manager

*“We are able to make decisions for ourselves by weighing up what is best for the business and what is best for the customer.”*

**Helen Morgan,**  
Tier 2 Advisor

**TUI Group** is the world’s number one tourism business, with an integrated offering (from planes to tours) that provides 20m customers with holidays across 180 regions. The 250-seat contact centre in Swansea and a small operation in Luton serve the UK market. Technologies include: Bright VOC, Avaya Aura WFO & in-house Knowledge Management.